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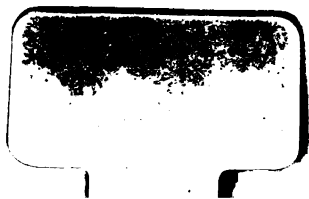
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A LETTER
TO THE
Members
OF THE
PROCLAMATION SOCIETY
AND
THE SOCIETY
FOR THE
SUPPRESSION OF VICE.

I should be ashamed to recommend from this place the suppression of vice amongst *some*, if I did not recommend its suppression amongst *all*; being sensible that the good example of their superiors would be of more efficacy in suppressing the vices of the lower orders, than the very best execution of the very best laws ever can be.

Bishop of LLANDAFF's Sermon.

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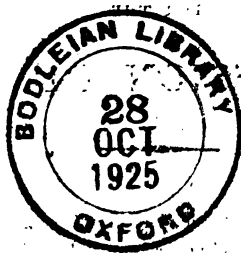
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**S. GOSNELL, Printer,
Little Queen Street, Holborn.**

LETTER,

&c.

*To the Noblemen and Gentlemen who are,
Members of the Proclamation Society
and the Society for the Suppression of
Vice.*

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE read with infinite pleasure the admirable discourse of the learned Prelate from whom I have borrowed the sentence that appears in the title-page. The object of your association is so obviously beneficial to the best interests of mankind, that folly alone, in close alliance with vice, can misconceive your intentions, or ca-

luminate their execution. It is an indisputable truth, that there are many enormous abuses, too deeply rooted to be removed by the most strenuous exertions of individual virtue, which may, still, yield to the persevering energy of numbers. In the present Letter I propose to confine myself to One, which, both in its principle and its effects, has a most baneful influence upon the public morals, and tends, more immediately than any other, to embitter the present, and endanger the future happiness of the higher and middle classes of the community: I mean the practice of *Duelling*, of which the Right Rev. Preacher observes, "that the law says it is murder, our manners say it is not." Against this vice every power of human genius has been triumphantly exerted upon paper; but, as if simple, inactive assent were all the homage which we owe to truth, to reason, and to duty, the conduct of almost every man, who does not profess the religious tenets of Quakers or Methodists, is as little influenced by his internal conviction, as if the well-directed

ridicule of the wit *, the arguments of the moralist, and the commands of religion, had positively enjoined the practice which they reprobate. What then could the most powerful writer hope to effect by literary labours? Nothing, if he address himself to *individuals*. Few are unconvinced of the folly and impiety of a practice, which none have the fortitude to decline, when unfortunately involved in those circumstances in which a choice must be made between just but solitary, self-approbation, and ignominy as universal as unmerited. Against this formidable enemy the well-compacted phalanx of associated virtue presents an unbroken front. The voice of Truth will not, I trust, be heard in vain by her avowed defenders, nor in vain will that assistance be solicited which their

* See an excellent paper on this subject in *THE WORLD*, by the late Lord Chesterfield. It is remarkable that the argument there so pleasantly urged is seriously just. How great must be the force of truth, when the most consummate man of the world that our country has produced in modern times, can with such force attack the most popular and deeply-rooted of all prejudices!—*Vide THE WORLD*, No. 113; or *LORD CHESTERFIELD'S Works*, vol. ii. p. 261.

steady co-operation can alone make effectual. Animated by this hope, and feeling most forcibly the truth which I present in the title-page as a shield against misconception or misrepresentation, I earnestly entreat the candid attention of the respectable names whom I address, and of all others who are friends to mankind, in examining with me the erroneous principles, the fatal consequences, and, what appears to me, the only possible remedy to this enormous evil.

Will it be denied that the *principle* in which this horrid practice originates is directly hostile to that which is the very basis of the Christian religion? The one inculcates humility, the other measures individual excellence by the standard of the highest self-exaltation. What is the immediate, inevitable, but horrible consequence of this contradiction? The characters of an *accomplished gentleman*, as that term is now falsely understood, and a *Christian*, are absolutely incompatible: their principles are destructive of each other; they serve different masters;

they hope for different rewards. Self-abasement and pride, God and the world, the approbation of the Creator as the recompense of obedience, the applause of the creature, the meed of disobedience,—such are the opposites which folly in vain endeavours to reconcile ; and impotent indeed is the resistance which the mad attempt encounters in the half-acquiescing disapprobation, reluctantly extorted from those to whom courtesy, rather than truth, assigns the epithet of wise and virtuous.

Are we yet to be taught that God demands of us, not only to abstain from sin, but also that our abstinence should be the result of the united principles of perfect love and implicit obedience ? Who is not conscious of the constant, and too frequently successful, efforts of his rebellious nature to counteract the influence of both ? But the monstrous prejudice we are combating often presents a spectacle the most afflicting to right reason.—A man of gentle, inoffensive manners, strong virtuous tendencies, and a deep sense of religious obligations, forcing himself, in base

compliance with popular frenzy, to adopt feelings foreign to his nature, stifling the suggestions of his reason and his conscience, and rushing blindfold into the violation of the law, which he adores, and which he fears may doom him to perdition * ; and yet this must he do, at least,

* Two instances of this kind deserve particular attention. The first is the case of Lieut. Col. Thomas, who some years ago was killed in a duel with Cosmo Gordon. This gentleman, who had retired from the army, and was living in an exemplary manner on his private estate in Wales, was called upon by his antagonist, in vindication of a charge which Col. T. had thought it his duty to prefer against him for improper conduct in his profession. Col. T. took the opinion of his military friends, and was compelled by their decision to accept the challenge. It is true the guilt or innocence of Cosmo Gordon remained precisely as it was, whether he killed Col. T. or had been killed himself. It is no less true, that flagrant military crimes may escape with impunity, if the acquittal of the accused person, which, in courts martial no less than in civil tribunals, must, from various causes, often happen where no doubt remains of his delinquency, gives him a right to endanger the life of his prosecutor : lastly, it is equally true that the 7th section of the Articles of War pronounces, " That no officer shall presume to give or send a challenge, under pain of being cashiered ;" and further, his Majesty there declares, " that whatsoever officer, &c. shall upbraid another for refusing a challenge, shall himself be punished as a challenger ; and we hereby acquit all officers and soldiers of any disgrace or

be ever *prepared* to do, or become the outcast of society, nay, in some situations, be driven from

opinion of disadvantage which might arise from their having refused to accept of challenges, as they will only have acted in obedience to our orders, and done their duty as good soldiers who subject themselves to discipline." None of these considerations availed; the unfortunate Thomas is forced to the field, after having subscribed his last will, which he commences with words to the following effect: "Whereas I — Thomas am now going, in *compliance with the foolish and impious custom of the world, to offend the laws of God, &c.*" In this conflict he fell, accompanied by the useless regret of the good; his example rather tending to confirm, than to correct, the prejudice against which he so impressively protests.

The late fatal event in America presents a spectacle still more insulting to reason and public decency. Conscience and religion again plead in vain: Law is insulted, not, as in ordinary cases, by the mere *connivance* of her guardians, but by the *overt act* of one of them, in contempt of her august authority.

Whilst opinion thus daringly tramples upon principle, who will ensure us, that the military spirit, which, in a just cause, is now so nobly and universally displayed, may not, by this infatuated perversion, disgrace our own island with a similar spectacle? Daily do we *now* behold the swords, which should repel hostile invasion, plunged in the bosoms of their country's defenders, to avenge the inconsiderate gallies of the convivial hour, or to obey the impulse of undisciplined pride, and intolerance of just subordination, miscalled honour.

his profession and the means of subsistence *. For though he may not be actually involved in a fatal contest, yet is he not exempt from guilt ; he countenances the commission of the crime in others, and would forfeit all the respect he enjoys, were it even supposed, that, in a similar situation, he would reject the bloody alternative.

Let it be permitted me here to make an ob-

* The following anecdote shall be given without any comment : the writer heard it related on most respectable authority ; he would be very happy to be assured that it is not true ; if it be correct, he leaves the reader to make his own reflections.

A very young officer, in a violent altercation with another at a regimental mess, had received a blow from his antagonist, in the presence of a considerable part of the corps : not knowing how to act in so critical a situation, he is said to have solicited the advice of an officer, who is universally considered as a pattern to the profession ; since, to every quality requisite to the formation of the accomplished soldier, he unites learning, morals, and religion. This officer, on hearing the young man's story, pronounced him a most unfortunate being, as nothing less than a miracle could preserve his life and honour : for, the insult he had received having been public, it could not be washed away in the blood of the offender alone, but he must challenge *every person who had been spectator of his ignominy* before he could recover from his degradation, and be allowed to continue in the service.

ervation on the fatal effects of general opinion
 when erroneous, as in the present case, and in
 some others of great importance to the virtue
 and happiness of mankind. When men indulge
 in what may not improperly be called their
 constitutional vices, or, in Scripture language,
 "the sin which easily besets them," they feel
 and acknowledge the turpitude of their conduct.
 Just fear, ingenuous shame, and every proper
 motive, combine gradually to fortify their resist-
 ance, and the co-operation of Divine Grace will
 finally enable them to triumph over their weak-
 ness. Their desire is to be good; and every
 victory that duty gains over evil inclination
 facilitates their future obedience. But, in the
 adopted vices of depraved opinion, they have all
 the guilt, without the gratification which is the
 present miserable reward of sin; and incur their
 own contempt, and the wrath of God, in exact
 proportion to their success in debasing reason
 and violating their feelings. This truth appears
 with striking evidence in that most inconsistent
 of all characters the *Christian Man of the World*.

He is at liberty to exercise every virtue, *that* alone excepted, which is the express, indispensable characteristic of his profession; he may, through the fear of God, abstain from every sin but *one*, in its kind the most atrocious, in its punishment the most dreadful, and which, in its probable consequence, must exclude repentance, and throw him upon the uncovenanted mercy of that God, whose blessings he has never been taught to expect, but through the medium of faith and obedience, and Whom in his last act he insults by the most deliberate contempt. For, let it be remarked, that this crime has a peculiar feature of malignity: it is not the sudden effusion of passion, which hurries men into criminality before their reason can exert itself with effect:—no; that the duellist may obtain immortal honour in a *Christian* society, he must forego every plea of human weakness, and display a deliberate, cold-blooded contempt of God and of his laws; he must repress the first workings of *natural* resentment, whilst he nourishes a *factitious unnatural* feeling; he must remember

decorum, whilst he forgets duty; his exterior is to exhibit the most refined courtesy, whilst his heart is swollen with more than barbarian rancour; he must not even neglect the claims of justice and private affection; he may demand a moderate time to discharge his debts, and arrange the concerns of his family, from whom he is tenderly to conceal the irreparable injury he meditates against them; he is to assume the show of tranquil enjoyment, which is the reward of the kind husband, the affectionate parent, the beneficent master in the bosom of his family; he is to teach them piety, charity, forgiveness of injuries, and resignation to the Divine Will, whilst he is disciplining his own mind to impiety, obduracy, revenge, and premeditated rebellion against God. With a heart thus torn by contending feelings, and, O wretched slavery to folly and prejudice! driven almost to frenzy by the very exercise of his reason, which will be heard, though not obeyed; thus *unchristianized*, thus *unhumanized*, he goes to meet, or inflict death; to perish in despair,

or to linger out a wretched existence, incessantly and vainly lamenting the blood he has shed, the soul he may have destroyed. Nor is this all. Will *one* murder suffice? Will he be permitted to urge, if again involved in similar circumstances; that his conscience, oppressed with guilt, revolts against a repetition of his crime? Will not insolent levity ridicule his agony? Will not the opprobrious epithet *coward*, resound in his ears? Must he not purchase the despicable privilege of receiving the smiles of folly, and the applause of impiety, by *again* subduing his feelings, *again* shutting out the light of reason, and *again* insulting his God?

Here let me indulge in a *fiction*; for the daily spectacle of the impious custom has polluted the innocence, and corrupted the principles of childhood: but, allow me to suppose a mind so unbackbied in the world, as not to know with what facility virtue and vice assume each other's garb, and how the very essence of things is virtually changed by the magical influence of baseless opinion; would not such a

mind exclaim, " Surely you calumniate your country, and your age ? Is it not the generous boast of Britons to exhibit religion more pure, laws more just and equal, morality more correct, and intellect more solid, more cultivated and practical than any other nation ? Are they ignorant that revenge and malice are the habit of mind, and deliberate bloodshedding the specific crime, most abhorrent from the spirit of the Gospel ? Do not the laws pronounce duelling to be murder ? Can morals be more insultingly violated than in the practice, or reason than in the causes assigned for the practice ? Calumniate not your nation by making it answerable for the guilt and folly of a few."

Would to God it were a calumny ! it is but too certain that the voice of religion itself, which in the sacred chair, strong in the cause of God, thunders out *His* denunciations against this monstrous impiety, is scarcely heard to oppose a feeble murmur to the impious ravings of embodied folly in the gay circle of polished barbarians. Justice and wisdom speak in the

statutes ; but the sword of the law strikes not the shameless, the undaunted offender. The decisions and sentence of righteous Justice are propounded only to be mocked ; her guardians hear without resentment her sacred principles combatted by the defenders of popular guilt ; the *honourable criminal*, liberated by a verdict, in which prejudice has drowned the sense and voice of law, returns to the world loaded with honour, and adding callousness to insolence. Or, if malignity and atrocity, beyond the liberal sufferance of opinion, have marked his crime, and forced from his judges the reluctant sentence of condemnation, in vain does Justice demand her victim *. Oh ! who can bear to think, that the exercise of the most amiable attribute of the most virtuous prince should even seem to justify enormous guilt and sanction the most pernicious error ?

* Whoever has paid any attention to the transactions of the last two years, will recollect many facts which will warrant the above observations, though it might be not only indelicate, but highly improper, to point them out distinctly.

Too many, alas! of those whom I address may perhaps have felt, with more or less intensity, some of the evils which have arisen from this most fatal prejudice; which, inverting the process of other contagions, is rapidly extending its ravages from the higher and middle orders of society to the simple habitation of the laborious mechanic.

But, it will be said, "without this check to insolence and villany, which the law is too feeble to restrain, society would be insupportable; the wise and good must therefore tolerate what they cannot wholly approve." This assertion is all that ever has been, or can be urged to palliate the most determined insult to laws human and divine: let us see whether it be not both a libel on our species, and an outrage on truth. It supposes that men are at once so destitute of courage and humanity, that the fear of death alone can ensure the existence of the ordinary courtesies and charities of social intercourse. Hence arises this contradiction, the usual fatality attendant on the theory and practice of duelling, that the espousers

of this argument, if such an abuse of words may be permitted to me, ascribe collectively to the species the absence of courage, that very virtue, the possession of which each individual is prepared to maintain at the hazard of his life. But what is the fact? *Are* the insolent and the licentious restrained from indulging their respective vices by the dread of chastisement from the hands of the gentle and the innocent? Is not society infested with numberless turbulent spirits, whose only passport is brutal ferocity? Does the fear of the avenging arm of the injured husband restrain the ardour of the vain unprincipled seducer, whose first ambition is the praise of *gallantry*, in the two senses of that term, equally popular, and equally mistaken? Against whom then does this silly, odious law of prejudice operate with full force, but the innocent and unoffending? What hidden truth does it bring to light? To what character does it do justice? What injury does it revenge? And whom does it protect? It oppresses the good; it covers truth with an eternal veil; it confounds

characters ; it accumulates, instead of avenging injuries ; and it strengthens the arm of the oppressor.

But it is needless further to illustrate truths, which scarcely any man is so brutish as not in some degree to feel, whatever be the motive which restrains him from averring his assent. They to whom these pages are addressed, will, I doubt not, admit that I have hitherto only feebly transcribed what is constantly passing through their own minds.

But now my real difficulty commences : I must not shrink from it : but I may be allowed to deprecate the censure of arrogance, in presuming to suggest a measure which possibly might wholly remove, certainly, in my judgment, would much diminish, the evil under consideration.

The remedy I would propose is so obvious, that it appears inconceivable that it should not have long since been put in execution, had there not existed some invincible objection which I have not the sagacity to discover. With the

most unaffected diffidence I would beg leave to ask, whether a measure, something resembling what I shall now venture to propose, would be wholly impracticable or inexpedient? Might not the members of the two most respectable Societies whom I have the honour to address, in the first place bind *themselves*, by subscribing a written agreement, expressing their abhorrence of the practice of duelling, and declaring their resolution *individually* to decline it in every possible contingency, and *collectively* to encourage by their support and protection every man who has the virtuous courage to resist it*?

* Lest it might be supposed, that the Societies would thus become an asylum for the most contemptible characters, the writer wishes it to be clearly understood that the persons who, under these circumstances, would be entitled to their protection, should be only such, whose general character for worth and integrity, or at least innocence of life, may give reason to presume, that their declining to comply with this vicious usage of the world, is not the result of vulgar timidity, but of a deeply-rooted awe and reverence of the Being Who is the only proper object of fear; which passion never exists in sufficient force with respect to Him, till it has overcome the apprehension of every evil except His displeasure.

Would it, further, be deemed the slightest infringement of the sacred respect which, on every account, is due to our beloved Sovereign, humbly to request his Majesty to take into consideration, how far his wisdom may point out to him to honour their endeavours with his Royal patronage? Can the real sentiments of so virtuous and religious a Prince be doubted? Whether his Majesty be viewed as the Head of the Church; as the Source of law in his Legislative capacity, and in his Executive as its Dispenser; or whether we look up to him as the Great Pattern of all the private and relative virtues; or the most fervent and zealous Assertor of the religion of Christ; if we appeal to him as the First Gentleman of his dominions, and therefore the leader and master of public opinion; or as the Head of that Army, whether professional or voluntary, on whose valour and virtue depends the safety of himself and of his people, and whose blood, in obedience to the very laws of war, should not be shed in the service of vice and folly, but cherished as the

vital fountain of the state ;—every exalted quality and function of our Sovereign gives confidence to the hope that he will graciously receive the suggestion. May we not then lay our wishes and intentions at the foot of the Throne, in humble hope of such support as his paternal wisdom and goodness shall think fit to afford * ? What may not be expected from such co-operation ? If there be truth and reason in what has been advanced, it will not, I would flatter myself, be altogether without effect. If am in an error, I confidently hope that the avowed champions of virtue and religion, to whom this letter is addressed, will pardon that error in him, who is not less ardent than themselves in the pur-

* The supporters of the sanguinary system will perhaps exclaim, covering their malignity with the veil of loyalty, that such an address would be an insolent attempt to dictate to Majesty. Such persons should be informed that our Monarch is truly a good man, and that it is of the essence of wisdom to discriminate, and of goodness to receive with indulgence every suggestion, which appears to be, not the offspring of petulance and pride, but of virtuous feeling.

suit of their grand object, however he may
mistake the means, and who is, with unfeigned
respect, their

Most humble Servant,

A BRITON.

and the other of the same kind, but the
first is the only one that is not
the same as the other.

THE FIRST

THE SECOND

APPENDIX.

As it might reasonably be objected to the writer, that, were it possible he could attain his object, an infinite number of real injuries would be wholly unpunished, he begs leave to offer a few reflections, which, for reasons perfectly obvious to the judicious reader, he has chosen rather to throw into an Appendix, than to insert in his Letter. He has even heard it said, that, were the practice of duelling annihilated, injured pride would frequently have recourse to assassination. Though he has better hopes of his countrymen, he must beg leave to observe, that this suggestion seems to shew what very thin partitions separate the duellist from the basest of murderers. He, however, most readily admits, that for every injury a power of awarding adequate redress should somewhere

be placed. He feels most sensibly that *real* honour is a treasure much more valuable than life itself; and that the ordinary tribunals have either no cognizance at all, or at least afford a very imperfect compensation, in many cases, where this most noble feeling has been severely outraged. The first observation that occurs is, that, in the present state of things, the same Draconic penalty of death, or at least the imminent danger of it, is decreed by the popular law of honour to the highest moral offences, and the slightest misdemeanour against that minor morality called politeness. In the former class the most frequent, as well as the most enormous offences, are adultery and seduction. These are crimes of such destructive consequence to the more amiable half of human society, and are the occasion of so much infelicity to the other half, that it may reasonably excite the astonishment of the philosopher; that whilst the value of a sheep is considered as equal to the life of a man, the virtue, and, by immediate consequence, the health, life, body,

and soul of an innocent, unsuspecting female of fourteen may be destroyed, without incurring *any* penalty, if there be no male protector, or at the utmost, on submitting to such damages, as a jury shall award to a broken-hearted parent, in compensation of the injury which, by a modern fiction of the law, he sustains in the loss, not of his daughter's honour and happiness, but of her *service*. In the case of adultery there is a legal redress; such ample damages are generally and very properly given to the injured husband, where there is no suspicion of collusion, as render the commission of this crime a very hazardous experiment. These pecuniary amends have happily rendered the appeal to the sword on such occasions very unusual; which shews at least that honour *may be* appeased without blood, whatever reflections this fact may suggest to the mind of the sagacious reader. But it would surely be becoming the virtuous indignation of a Christian legislature, to take under their protection infantine female innocence, that is, from the commence-

ment of maturity, to the age before which the law does not presume a sufficient portion of discretion in either sex to dispose of their own person and property. For though adultery be the breach of a more sacred law than seduction, yet does this latter crime frequently indicate a more corrupt heart than the greater civil offence. The whole burden of the guilt falls more immediately on the seducer. The *married* woman cannot be *deceived* into ruin; perhaps more than half of the most wretched victims to the baseness of man, whose unprotected, *necessitated* career of sin and misery is a reproach to the virtue and humanity of the metropolis, acquired their first *idea* of the guilt which has destroyed them in its actual commission. Were these horrible crimes, as far as might be, *restrained*, or adequately punished by the laws, there would only remain for animadversion the last description of injuries; those I mean, which, in various degrees, diminish that just estimation in society which is called honour, and to which every man has an undeniable claim, till he has

forfeited it by his own act, clearly and unequivocally proved. Things which are in themselves trifles, when viewed in this light acquire another character and denomination. In matters of personal etiquette men are left to be the sole judges in their own cause ; and these are the cases on which, of all others, they are the most incompetent to decide. A person of real integrity might be safely permitted to judge between himself and another in a question of property ; but that mortal exists not, who may be allowed to adjust all the punctilious differences, and reconcile the minute pretensions of his own pride and that of another. Here then a new tribunal is wanting ; a *Court of Honour*, whose decisions should be without appeal, and invariably observed under legal authority. The writer has heard with infinite satisfaction that such courts have already been established in some regiments. Why may not this example be followed ? Why may it not receive the highest sanctions in *civil* life ? In the smallest communities there are always many individuals, whose reputation for a

superior sense of propriety, and elegance of manners, is generally admitted. Of persons of this description a tribunal might be formed in every extensive district, who should have cognizance of all deviations from that propriety of conduct, without which society cannot subsist, but which do not come within the contemplation of the ordinary tribunals. It should seem that the erection of such a court of honour might be accomplished with little or no expense. The flattering distinction of being nominated to such a charge, as it would imply the attribution of superior qualities of heart and understanding to the individuals so selected, would be to them an ample remuneration. Though, were they to receive pecuniary compensation, it would be difficult to say how money could be better employed, were it not that the peculiar dignity of this species of tribunal would be violated, and its decisions consequently would lose that *sacro-sanctity*, if I may be allowed the expression, with which they should be surrounded,

to make them effectual to the great object of the institution.

Thus much the writer has thought it necessary to say, to shew that he had not considered his subject in a partial view. To go farther would be presumption. Should his sentiments be so happy as to meet with the approbation of those to whom they are addressed, he is sure that neither wisdom nor energy will be wanting, to give shape and consistency to a plan which may now appear ill-formed and indigested.

He thinks malignity itself cannot mistake his motives, nor impute to arrogance and self-conceit the public expression of sentiments and feelings, which originate in his love for his country and his species, and reverence towards his God.

THE END.

S. GOSNELL, Printer,
Little Queen Street, Holborn.

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